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THE FUND RAISING FUNCTION OF UNHCR: STRATEGIES FOR RAISING FUNDS FOR REFUGEES*

Introduction

1. This Conference Room Paper contains the observations of UNHCR on the study undertaken by The Fund Raising Center entitled An Analysis and Evaluation of the Fund Raising Function (January-March 1991). It will be recalled that at the 3 May 1991 Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/770) there had been a preliminary discussion of the study. In commenting on the study, the Head of the Fund Raising Services told the same meeting that the Secretariat would be undertaking a detailed analysis of the recommendations to determine what could be implemented and the modalities of such implementation. This Conference Room Paper reflects the outcome of that analysis.

Preliminary observations

2. Several delegations at the Sub-Committee Meeting of 3 May expressed appreciation of the consultant's report as a useful analysis and evaluation of the fund raising functions within UNHCR, but questioned whether the report had

* This document was presented to the forty-second session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme under the symbol EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.20.

addressed all the issues of concern to the Executive Committee Temporary Working Group in relation to funding mechanisms (A/AC.96/742, para.40,(h)-(k)). The validity of this comment is reflected in the title of this Conference Room Paper; the observations which follow focus on the fund raising function within UNHCR.

Recommendations of the consultant

3. The principal recommendations are set out in pages iii and iv of the Executive Summary of the Report (see EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.6 of 24 April 1991). In addition, the study makes a number of recommendations for the re-structuring of the Fund Raising Service, as well as proposals for additional personnel and budgetary support as UNHCR's funding base allows. It also proposes a schedule of activities for the first 18 months of an expanded fund raising effort. The proposals as well as the recommendations will be considered in this Paper.

4. The recommendations cover a range of disparate issues and are directed at various parties: donor governments, non-donor governments, UNHCR etc. While some of the recommendations appear to have a somewhat contrived and arbitrary character e.g. projected monetary targets, the value of the Report as a whole is that it has allowed UNHCR to focus on a ange of issues and to clarify its fund raising policies and strategies. The points that follow summarize elements of that policy and strategy.

Overall goals and strategies

5. To date, UNHCR has not been involved in any meaningful way in fund raising in the strict sense of the term; rather, its efforts have been directed principally to making known to governments UNHCR's assessed needs and to negotiating with governments the precise use of their contributions, as well as reporting on the same. What is now proposed are specific strategies to broaden its donor base, especially in the private sector, re-focus the efforts of the Fund Raising Service so that its efforts are directed to strict fund raising activities and in concentrating on a precise set of funding priorities.

6. UNHCR's fund raising capacity is intimately linked with a range of other issues: the Office's clear perception of its role as an humanitarian organization whose relevance is creatively communicated; the perceptions of the performance of UNHCR and judgements of the donor community on the efficiency of UNHCR in serving the cause of refugees; the effectiveness of the Office in projecting the needs of refugees, etc. While UNHCR's fund raising function is inextricably linked to these other factors, this Conference Room Paper confines itself to a consideration of fund raising issues per se.

7. Strategies for fund raising have a direct relationship to the Office's overall corporate goals that have been clearly articulated by senior management and the more particular objectives of increasing the resources

8. The Office's overall goal of attending to the needs of refugees can be prioritized in three specific objectives in terms of fund raising:

- assuring the funding of General Programmes;
- providing funds in support of emergency preparedness and emergency response;
- improving the the Office's resource base so as to be able to respond better to voluntary repatriation opportunities.

9. In terms of strategies to assure funding of these goals, the following is proposed:

- a more systematic approach to the governmental sector;
- renewed efforts vis-à-vis the private/corporate sector;
- a more creative use of human resources dedicated to the fund raising function;
- an enhanced working relationship with the Public Information Section of UNHCR.

The governmental sector

10. This sector is the primary source of UNHCR's funds. So as to better exploit this source, a differentiated strategy has been developed with three particular groupings in mind. These three groups are:

- traditional major donors;
- other donor governments;
- potential donor governments.

11. In regard to the traditional major donors, the goal is to maintain (and if possible to increase) their level of support. In consolidating and building on the excellent existing relationship, issues that have been identified as important are:

- better reporting (see below);
- an enhanced understanding by UNHCR of the funding mechanisms and assistance priorities of the concerned governments, e.g. women, refugee children, etc. as well as of other specific considerations and regional emphasis underlying their humanitarian and development budgets.

12. In the category of other donors are those governments from whom UNHCR would hope to increase its share of their humanitarian budgets. Strategies to achieve this would include high-level representation to ministers and parliamentarians etc., complemented by detailed presentations of the needs of refugees and the work of UNHCR.

13. The third government category embraces those who to-date have not been

14. In seeking to engage more meaningfully the governmental sector in the work of UNHCR, an enhanced role is envisaged for some Branch Offices of UNHCR in coordination with the Fund Raising Service, as well as greater coordinated use of the Public Information Section of UNHCR.

Non-governmental sector

15. Long considered as one of the untapped sources of extra funds for UNHCR, this sector will receive special emphasis in UNHCR's fund raising strategies. UNHCR will seek to work cooperatively with NGOs in approaching parts of the private sector. Recent initiatives by the High Commissioner in regard to one country have borne out the potential of this source of funds. What will be important in any approaches to this sector will be sensitivity to a range of factors, especially the role of NGOs in a given country and the extent to which they rely on part of the private sector e.g. the general public, for their own funding.

16. Rather than being seen to be competing with NGOs, potential exists for joint UNHCR-NGO approaches for specific programmes for a particular refugee situation for which there is public sympathy and concern. Such initiatives will be planned in cooperation with UNHCR's NGO Unit.

17. In relation to the possible role of Country/National Support Committees in creating public awareness of refugee issues and in facilitating access to the private sector, a nuanced approach will be required. The function of such groups will vary from country to country (USA, Spain, France, Japan ...). What is imperative, however, is that such associations will need to be provided with adequate support and servicing. Here the Branch Offices of UNHCR and the Public Information Section of UNHCR have also an important role.

Staffing considerations

18. An enhanced fund raising strategy obviously will depend on the professionalism of the Fund Raising Services (FRS) within UNHCR. This implies a recognition that fund raising is an "art". The corollary of this recognition is that staff assigned to or working in FRS need appropriate training in fund raising, in addition to being well versed in all aspects of UNHCR's programmes and related budgetary practices. Having invested in FRS staff to acquire this professionalism, the question that will have to be addressed by management is the duration of the Standard Assignment Length (SAL) of staff working in the FRS. This recognition of the specialist nature of fund raising work should not preclude the rotation of staff in FRS to the field; field experience provides FRS staff with the indispensable experience of refugee situations that assists them in "selling", in a convincing manner, the refugee cause.

19. There are no immediate plans to increase the number of staff working in Fund Raising Services. The incremental approach, however, as recommended by

20. A more significant role should be played by Branch Office staff in the fund raising activities of the Office. Support for Country/National Support Committees will call for greater involvement of Branch Office staff.

Public Information

21. The success of fund raising is intimately linked with the preparation and presentation of what is technically called the "case for support", namely the data, research, statistics and analysis which go to make up the "case statement" described in the Study as "the focus of persuasion of a fund raising endeavour". The preparation of such a statement or series of particular statements requires the professional input of the Public Information Section. A study entitled A Communications Strategy for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (July 30, 1991) has pointed out a strong media presence would obviously facilitate UNHCR's efforts to approach the private sector for funds.

Reporting

22. As the Funding Center study points out, a disproportionate amount of time of the staff working in FRS is taken up with reporting to donors. The Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters could, therefore, consider this question of reporting requirements. The same issue was raised in the Donors Briefing Paper on UNHCR/WFP Cooperation (18 June 1991). Most recently, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in its Report on UNHCR Activities financed by Voluntary Funds for 1990-1991 and Proposed Programmes and Budget for 1992 (A/AC.96/780, para.5), made the general observation that "some of the current procedures for reporting on programme management, implementation and evaluation of projects are cumbersome and costly. The Committee recommends that UNHCR, in close consultation with donors, should streamline its reporting and payment procedures to make them more manageable and cost effective (see documents A/AC.96/773, para.5(e) and A/AC.96/761)." Given the notable improvement in general reporting by way of bulletins and newsletters, and the potential to enhance existing reporting mechanisms e.g. Executive Committee documentation, it is hoped that the question of excessive reporting requirements can be negotiated to the satisfaction of the parties concerned.

Conclusion

23. The above issues will be further elaborated on in the deliberations of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters in the course of the coming year. The High Commissioner looks to Member States to assist the Office in establishing a more dynamic and effective Fund Raising Service in the service of refugees.